

VISTAS

AN ALLEGHENY LAND TRUST PUBLICATION | 2016 Q1



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"The mountains are calling and I must go."

— John Muir

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wonders and realities of the universe about us,
the less taste we shall have for *destruction*."

— Rachel Carson

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"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth
find reserves of strength that will
endure as long as life lasts."



— Rachel Carson

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We do our best to run accurate reports to list all of our donors; sometimes human and technological errors get in the way. If you were a 2015 donor, but do not see your name listed, please contact us so we can recognize your support.

ALLEGHENY LAND TRUST 2015 IN REVIEW

A Glimpse into 2015

by Christopher Beichner
President & CEO

Land and people are ALT's greatest resources, and it takes so many of the one resource to protect the other. Last year is the most recent example of how remarkable contributions from our volunteers, investors and partners have led to historic results. The infographic to the left helps to illustrate this point.

What the numbers alone won't tell you is ALT is experiencing significant signs of growth. The number of properties protected in 2015 tied our 2014 accomplishment of five new conservation areas, which is the most properties we've ever protected in a calendar year. The 292 acres protected in 2015, however, is the highest number of acres we've protected in one calendar year.

Our ability to properly manage our conservation areas has swelled. As a nationally accredited land trust, we are held to very high standards of stewardship. ALT staff and volunteers go beyond those expectations, and also partner with outstanding groups like Venture Outdoors, Allegheny CleanWays, Paddle Without Pollution and several Boy and Girl Scout groups to implement projects benefiting wildlife habitat and protecting the ecology.

Our stewardship team has also advanced recreational opportunities in 2015. We partnered with the Emerald Trail Corps to build a new mile of trail at Dead Man's Hollow. Staff worked with several corporate groups, including BNY Mellon, to maintain several more miles of trail. Stewardship staff retained a local consultant to develop a comprehensive trail plan for our Barking Slopes Conservation Area. We also worked closely with groups like the Regional Trail Corporation and Hollow Oak Land Trust to ensure Allegheny Regional Asset District (ARAD) funding was well-spent on their trail building, maintenance and accessibility needs.

ALT is strongest when we have a resilient staff and partners. Our ability to engage in seven special projects in 2015 demonstrates the high capacity of our staff and robust partnerships. We engaged Wall-to-Wall Studios to revolutionize our brand, including a new logo, marketing materials and soon-to-be-released website. Staff worked diligently last calendar year starting our application for national re-accreditation. We were originally accredited in 2010. Accreditation lasts five years, and this year was our time to reapply. We began our application to be re-accredited in 2015, and the process will conclude in 2016.

ALT has been extremely active in urban land conservation, and is currently working on a dozen urban projects of various sizes and scales. We also engaged a national consultant to work with a grassroots coalition, including the Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group, Grow Pittsburgh and Lawrenceville Corporation, to explore the feasibility of a Community Land Trust (CLT) for Greater Pittsburgh. The feasibility would determine if a land trust model would make a significant impact in creating permanent affordable housing options in the region. This study has proven again that whether it is land conservation or land control for affordable housing, land and people are our greatest resources that must be protected and utilized wisely.

5 NEW GREEN SPACES OF 292 ACRES

protecting sequestering absorbing

97,500 trees

1.2M lbs carbon

250M gal. rainwater

582 Volunteers

volunteered

5,129 Hours

donated

\$117,960 of In-Kind Investment

removed

6,569lbs of Trash

948 Donors raised

\$2.35M for Land Acquisition & Stewardship
Allowing for us to have the roots to grow all of the above projects, volunteers, and accomplishments

thank you!



For more information, e-mail Chris at cbeichner@alleghenylantrust.org.

notes from the land:

When Trolls Resided in Green Space, Not Cyber Space

by Roy Kraynyk | VP of Land Protection & Capital Projects

WHAT'S THAT?!

I don't know, looks like a little cave, tunnel, bridge or something... let's check it out!

I wonder if anything lives under it, like a troll or something? Look under it.

No way- YOU look under it.

All right, you big chicken, I'll look. Ooooo, I can see a big pair of glowing eyes!

Are you serious? I'm outta here!

*Come here! Check this out. Hurry up!
What is it?*

Look at the writing all over this tree. There's a number; it looks like a date.

Holy mackerel! I think it says "1-9-4-8". I wonder who carved that.

Maybe the troll that has allegedly lived under that bridge since the beginning of time...

These were the conversations I imagined while walking down a character-rich trail on a prospective property. The imagined dialogue took place ages ago between a couple of kids exploring the woods behind their neighborhood and discovering a cool hemlock grove overlooking a stream, a majestic triple-trunk beech tree and small, mysterious bridge.

The beech along this trail was densely tattooed to more than 10' up its trunk with initials, dates, art and declarations of true love, such as: LD + AM. In some cases, there was evidence that the love didn't last, such as a big X through one or both sets of initials, or the initials were altered to reflect the name of a new love interest. You can imagine the competition in the neighborhood to see who could climb the highest and proudly claim their achievement with their initials.

It's difficult to avoid wondering about the rich history of this scribed landscape. In a way, this tree

holds a historical public record of the people who lived in the area, and, in some cases, catalogues their relationships. Unfortunately, there aren't too many recent dates on the tree.

It seems that, as of late, kids don't come down to this special woodland treasure anymore. We didn't notice any recent dates etched into the scarred, but tolerant beech tree. Maybe the troll, or the kid's imaginations, scared them indoors to play on their electronic devices and computers where the decidedly less scary cyber trolls reside.

Personally, I hope that cyber trolls will begin to scare the kids, and adults for that matter, back into the woods. That would be the best result, in my opinion, because we can all use a little more nature to nurture our minds, bodies and imaginations. And besides, the "scary trolls" in the woods aren't real-- or are they???



Photos by Roy Kraynyk. Discovering these wonderful little woodland treasures is definitely one of the benefits of this job. We found this one during a site visit to one of the several properties that we are considering protecting in 2016.

For more information, e-mail Roy at rkraynyk@alleghenylandtrust.org.

Behind the Scenes of ALT's Land Deals

by Roy Kraynyk
Vice President of Land & Capital Projects

It is hard to predict how much land ALT will protect in any given year. The uncertainty of funding, fragile negotiations with sellers and additional external factors beyond our control make predicting real estate acquisition more difficult than it would seem.

Currently, we have about 45 properties totaling a little more than 3,000 acres in our prospective property pipeline. Each year, we start with a pipeline of potential projects, some of which are already in negotiations or under contract. We come across these listings in various ways: staff members find them while driving down the road or researching an area's opportunities; sometimes we receive phone calls from owners or neighbors of land for sale; and sometimes others call to offer land as a gift to ALT. Over the course of the year, properties fall off the list and others are added for various reasons. Last year we closed on 5 properties.

Ideally, we secure a property under contract in the first quarter of the year so that we can meet the mid-April PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resource (DCNR) grant deadline.

Simultaneously, our real estate lawyer is preparing and submitting the real estate tax exemption applications to Allegheny County for land that we closed on in the previous year.

Once the DCNR application is sub-



Photo by Roy Kraynyk. President & CEO Chris Beichner (left) and Vice President of Land Resources Emilie Rzotkiewicz walk a potential property with a Board member.

mitted, we launch the local campaign for the matching funds that the DCNR grants require. In a perfect world, we have the match already raised so our application to DCNR is ranked as high as possible.

While the local campaign is underway, we are also conducting due diligence, including a site visit with the ALT Land Protection Committee, title work and Phase One Environmen-

tal Site Assessment. DCNR grants are usually announced in October or November. If we have raised enough money and all the site investigations are satisfactory, we seek authorization from our organization's Board of Directors to proceed to closing.

At any given moment, there are typically a number of active negotiations, title searches, Phase One's, appraisals, fundraising campaigns and tax-exemption applications happening. The challenges we face during this phase are merging all the moving parts, prioritizing the projects and developing comprehensive individual project funding plans

A predictable and stable funding stream would definitely help, and empower ALT to accelerate our land protection efforts. Fortunately, there is a fledgling conversation around that topic that we hope bears fruit in the coming years. Until then, we count on our existing public and private foundation partners, and most importantly the support of our donors like you who help ALT save local land.

For more information, e-mail Roy at rkraynyk@alleghenylandtrust.org.

For a project to proceed to closing, many factors need to merge; including:

- Does the land meet our criteria? Does it contribute to the scenic, recreational and environmental well-being of the community?
- Is the asking-price equal or close to the appraised value? Due to our use of public funding, we have two, separate independent appraisals conducted to determine value.
- Does the timing work for the seller? We have a very successful track record raising money to acquire and protect land, however, it can take a year or more to raise the money due to foundation and public funding cycles. So, we have to ensure that we have sellers with the ability to have patience.
- The land must either be free of environmental hazards, or the hazards must be able to be mitigated.

Meet A Steward: Our Interns

by Caitlin Seiler | Director of Volunteer & Land Resources

It's now our third "Meet a Steward" article; two of these three articles have featured more than one dedicated volunteer at a time. We hope to recognize all who do outstanding work with us, and sometimes that means recognizing cohesive groups in batches. In this issue, we're taking the opportunity to profile five supporters who have joined our team as interns this year.



Kim Bellora Maltempo

Linbrook Woodlands Consultants



Eve Reynolds

University of Pittsburgh graduate students Kim Bellora Maltempo and Wuyi Ning (Eve Reynolds) have joined ALT as graduate consultants from the School of Public and International Affairs. They'll work with ALT to create a community visioning and engagement plan related to the newly-acquired Linbrook Woodlands. Kim, pursuing a Masters of Public Policy and Management, also works as a Policy Strategist at the University of Pittsburgh Institute of Politics. Eve, pursuing a Masters of Public and International Affairs, was actively involved for more than sixteen years in international communities, schools and churches. Both consultants have a wealth of experience working with various levels of government, as well as a multitude of skills related to event planning and community coordination.



Leah Haas | *Stewardship Outreach Intern*

After graduating in May 2015 from Kent State University, Leah worked with ALT. She has a passion for the environment and loves working with people who have the same passion. At ALT, she assisted with property management on several conservation areas, developed property information pages for feature properties, and helped with social media posts. Her skills and help were greatly appreciated.



Seneca Harah | *Conservation Intern*

Originally from Pittsburgh, Seneca studies Environmental Science and Economics at Chatham University. For the next few months, she will be working with ALT on a few green spaces including Dead Man's Hollow, Linbrook, and a newly-acquired property on Hunt Road in Bell Acres. She will survey green spaces for flora species, work on land management plans, and help to organize community outreach events. Seneca is looking forward to spending time outdoors doing what she loves as well as learning from her peers at ALT.



Mark Scarpitti | *Conservation Intern*

Mark began working as a Conservation Intern at ALT last fall. It was at this time that he married his wife and moved to the area. He's just come from having taught high school in Edinboro, PA for the previous eight years. Mark is involved with land surveying, conservation efforts, and community planning; much of his recent work has involved the newly acquired Linbrook Woodlands property. He is interested in the interaction of economic, environmental, and cultural issues as they relate to communities and their land use.

Spring to Volunteering: ALT's Upcoming Stewardship Season

by **Emilie Rzotkiewicz** | Vice President of Land Resources

As our staff begins gearing up for the busy stewardship season, we wanted to share with you some of our plans for ALT Conservation Areas in hopes that you have some ideas on how you can help us accomplish our goals more quickly, more efficiently, and more sustainably. We are always looking for

partners to help us with various tasks in the office, moving and working on the ground, and teaching and feeding volunteers at our events throughout each season. With several workdays planned around trail building, invasive plant removal, and trash removal, we are also in need of individuals or groups to sponsor these days to cover food and supply expenses.

Audubon Greenway

With construction of a home on a nearby property, ALT's trail plan for AG will be developed sooner than expected. This year we'll be working on rerouting trails, creating a new parking area for safe congregation, planting new wildflowers, and adding some bee hives for an on-site apiary. We can use your help, and all of this will make AG an even more alluring exploration spot for all of your hiking, biking, bird-watching, horseback riding, and hunting adventures.

Barking Slopes

We are working our way through implementing a new trail plan on the Slopes, which will improve current trails and build new routes. This year, we are focusing on the lower trail system with the goal of building a clear trail from the parking area on Barking Road; we'll also be continuing efforts to clear dumping, and aiming to better patrol and end trail-destroying ATV and Quad use. Please help by spreading the word that no motorized vehicles are permitted on any ALT lands.

Dead Man's Hollow

At DMH, volunteers are needed to plant trees and seeds along stretches of closed trails, to maintain new trails, and to address unsustainable sections. We expect to complete the Cool Spirit Trail, and to begin work on other DMH trails this year. If you are a person with trail-building skills, knowledge of sustainable trail design and construction, or are simply someone excited to help with trail work, we could use your help as we continue to expand and improve the trail system!

Linbrook Woodlands

If you like being a literal and metaphorical trail-blazer, then our newest conservation area is ready for you to explore! We'll hold a public meeting in March to solicit ideas and volunteers for the inaugural stewardship season at LW. In years to come, we'll work on trail connections between Linbrook Park and the Woodlands as we remove invasive species and compile flora and fauna species lists.

Sycamore Island

While the work isn't over at Sycamore Island, we now consider it as in maintenance mode. We will continue slaying the Japanese knotweed throughout early summer to stunt its growth. If you want to have fun, swing machetes, and play on a "deserted" island - then Sycamore Island is where you want to be. If you have a boat, you're in high demand! Often our biggest challenge is getting our willing volunteers to the island!

Wingfield Pines

This summer's annual Hamm Intern will host educational events at WP. Keep an eye out on our online calendar, or, if you'd like to share your knowledge, contact us to lead a hike! We'll be holding a BioBlitz in late July, so if you know your mushrooms, grasses, lichens, birds, etc., then please join us to put together a species list for the property. We'll also be looking to acquire grant funds to create an ecological plan with a firm to provide the best quality habitat possible for the site.

To volunteer on one of these sites or projects, e-mail Caitlin at cseiler@alleghenylandtrust.org.

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Allegheny Land Trust
 416 Thorn Street
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 15143

UPCOMING EVENTS

APRIL 9 | 10A-1P | CLEAN-UP @ LOWRIES RUN

Get your hands dirty removing old tires, de-trashing the conservation area and meeting other volunteers this Spring clean-up.

April 16 | 10A-1P | Workday @ Linbrook Woodlands

Visit our newest addition and start on our To-Do list including trail work and invasive plant removal.

APRIL 19 | 5P-7P | #ALTtrailtues @ DMH

Join us on the 3rd Tuesday every month through September to help build new and improve existing trails at Dead Man's Hollow. On this first Trail Tuesday, help us improve and expand the Dead Man's Hollow trail system. **RSVP HERE: bit.ly/trailtuesalt1**
 Visit our website or subscribe to our Google Calendar to find this event and web page.

April 23 | 10A-1P | Tree Planting & Trail Work @ AG

Celebrate Earth Day with us by planting native trees and improving trails at Audubon Greenway.

April 30 | 10A-1P | Garlic Mustard Removal @ DMH

Visit our largest and oldest Conservation Area, Dead Man's Hollow, and help us combat invasive Garlic Mustard.

May 7 | 10A-1P | Trail Workday @ Barking Slopes

Dig in the dirt and help us clear new trails at the Barking Slopes Conservation Area.

Direct questions to Caitlin: cseiler@alleghenylandtrust.org
 Please register for all events here: bit.ly/altoutside

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